

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Christopher Miklos v. L&W Supply Corp.

Docket No. 52032

This case is an appeal from the Idaho Industrial Commission filed by Christopher Miklos, a drywall delivery worker who was injured on the job in 2019, resulting in a tendon tear. Miklos initially received workers' compensation benefits, but his employer's insurer stopped benefits in 2021, claiming he had reached maximum medical improvement. Miklos sought further treatment due to ongoing pain. Later imaging revealed a recurrent tendon tear, but the Commission denied his claim for additional benefits, concluding the new injury was not caused by the original workplace accident.

Miklos argued that his recurrent tendon tear was a consequence of his original 2019 workplace ankle injury, made more likely by the structural weakness following surgery. The employer, however, claimed the new injury was an unrelated, distinct event occurring after employment ended, making the prior case law (*Sharp v. Thomas Brothers Plumbing*, 170 Idaho 343, 510 P.3d 1136 (2022), and the compensable consequences doctrine) inapplicable.

The Idaho Supreme Court reversed the Commission's decision. The Court concluded that the Commission erred in determining that *Sharp* and the compensable consequences doctrine were inapplicable to this case. The compensable consequences doctrine provides that aggravations of work injuries, including secondary injuries, are compensable if there is a demonstrable causal connection between the initial injury and the later injury, unless the employer proves the worker acted with rash disregard for risk of harm. The Court explained Miklos' recurrent tendon tear was an aggravation of a compensable injury because despite the parties' dispute, the medical evidence showed a demonstrable causal connection between Miklos' 2019 work-related tendon tear and his recurrent tendon tear.

In addition, the Court explained that the Commission improperly required Miklos to disprove all other possible causes of his recurrent tendon tear, rather than requiring the employer to establish that the aggravation of a compensable injury, or a secondary injury, resulted from Miklos' rash or deliberate disregard for a material risk that the harm would occur.

The Court awarded Miklos attorney fees and costs on appeal and remanded the case for further proceedings.

******This summary constitutes no part of the Court's opinion. It has been prepared by court staff for the convenience of the public.******